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C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 001351

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E.O. 12958: DECL: TEN YEARS
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [INRA](#) [MARR](#) [CO](#) [EC](#)
SUBJECT: GOE TO GET TOUGHER ON ILLEGAL ARMED GROUPS;
LOOKING TO DEEPEN SECURITY COOPERATION (C-AL7-00365)

Classified By: PolOff Jarahn Hillsman for reasons 1.4 (b&d).

11. (C) Summary: Correa's national security minister coordinator, Fernando Bustamante, told the Ambassador on June 8 that the GOE planned to strengthen its security posture in the north to restrict the activities of Colombian illegal armed groups in Ecuador. He said Correa was very concerned over the GOE's lack of control over the region, and asked for additional USG security support. In a previous meeting with Embassy officials, Bustamante acknowledged that security cooperation with the U.S. is a sensitive issue here and would need to be carefully managed, but said that one of Plan Ecuador's foremost policy objectives - control of illicit activities, requires continued and enhanced cooperation. Ecuador has traditionally been more inclined to blame Colombia for its border problems rather than squarely face up to their own side of the equation. Correa's order appears to signal a welcome and potentially significant new pragmatism. End Summary.

Biographical Information: Fernando Bustamante

12. (U) Fernando Bustamante, 56, was born in New York to an Ecuadorian diplomat. He did his undergraduate work in Sociology at the Catholic University of Chile in Santiago. He holds advanced degrees in Urban & Regional Planning from the Latin American Institute of Economic and Social Planning and Public Administration from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. Bustamante pursued advanced study at the Catholic University of Chile and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His professional background is academic, serving mostly as a researcher, analyst, consultant, and professor. He taught at the University of San Francisco with President Rafael Correa. Bustamante currently serves as Correa's Minister Coordinator for Internal and External Security, charged with charting the GOE's national security policy objectives. His office is charged with coordinating Plan Ecuador.

Ambassador Seizes Opportunity; Presses Security Cooperation

13. (C) The Ambassador met with Bustamante at her residence on June 8 to discuss his upcoming trip to Washington to lobby for ATPDEA renewal and to discuss security cooperation. The Ambassador explained that Congress will decide on ATPDEA extension, and that the Administration supports a short-term extension for all countries. Bustamante asked for advice on how to make the GOE case for ATPDEA most convincingly. He

specifically asked about the sensitivities of making the geopolitical argument, saying that within the Correa administration there is a group of moderates (he included himself, the Foreign Minister and the Defense Minister in this group) who argue with the harder line advisors who want to take the government farther left. He said that non-renewal of ATPDEA would greatly strengthen the hand of the hard line contingent.

¶4. (C) Turning to security cooperation, the Ambassador offered Bustamante assistance from the Defense Department's Center for Civilian-Military Relations to build capacity for Ecuadorian defense ministry personnel newly under civilian leadership. Bustamante eagerly responded to the offer asked for more information (note: a meeting between Bustamante and the Center has been scheduled for during his visit). Responding to Bustamante's desire to deepen technical security assistance to Ecuador, including tracking of airspace in the Northern Border region, the Ambassador explained the Cooperative Nations Information Exchange System (CNIES) currently pending before the Foreign Ministry. She explained that CNIES, which was cutoff in mid-2005 for failure by Ecuador to sign an agreement on use of the information, would give Ecuador real-time radar tracking information. Bustamante was very receptive, expressing surprise that the GOE had not moved on this opportunity. He vowed to find the holdup and push forward. The Ambassador expressed USG concerns over reports that the 25 Special Forces Battalion permanently deployed in the northern province of Esmeraldas might be recalled to the 9th Special Forces Brigade in the central highlands city of Latacunga, Cotopaxi province. Bustamante appeared unaware of the rumored shift and promised to look into it.

Bustamante Offers More on Plan Ecuador; Stresses USG Support

¶5. (C) USAID Director and PolOff met with Bustamante on May 31 to discuss Plan Ecuador and clarify the role of the Northern Border Development Unit (UDENOR) - USAID's current interlocutor. Bustamante said that Plan Ecuador is a national security plan focused on improving the lives of northern border residents through development. Increased GOE presence and control of the area will be necessary to achieve this, he admitted. Bustamante explained that the GOE under Plan Ecuador will for the first time have a nationally coordinated strategy to address conditions in the north. The plan, he noted, has seven objectives in the areas of institutional strengthening; education; health; basic services, control of illicit activities; human rights; and territorial integrity. International donors, through the Foreign Ministry's coordination unit (INECI), would be able to select an area of interest under the seven pillars to support. This will allow the GOE to channel support into previously identified areas of concern and hopefully see more significant results, he explained.

¶6. (C) Director General for Border Relations with Colombia Mario Guerrero told PolOff on June 12 that the GOE is currently completing the second phase of Plan Ecuador planning - identifying and assigning inter-agency roles. He confirmed that MFA-INECI would oversee international donor contributions, and the Northern Border Development Unit (UDENOR) would only serve as a technical implementing agency. Guerrero said that an inter-agency body, headed by Bustamante, would identify project areas, secure funding for these projects, and assign them to UDENOR and other agencies for implementation. He admitted, however, that other governments and international partners had expressed some anxiety over the lack of details surrounding the plan, and asked for patience while the GOE works out what he believes to be a very serious policy agenda.

Bustamante Makes a Surprise Pitch for U.S. Military Assistance

¶7. (C) As the May 31 meeting was coming to a close, Bustamante made an unpredicted push for greater security cooperation. He said that Correa in a May 29 security

briefing on the northern border ordered him to find ways to secure Ecuador's border. He asked for USG assistance to build up to 35 new military posts along the Ecuador-Colombia border, and to increase the Ecuadorian military's radar and technological capabilities. The government is serious about this and our efforts to increase national security will also help the U.S., Bustamante affirmed. Switching to English, he told PolOff that military cooperation with the U.S. remains sensitive here, but that Plan Ecuador's fifth objective (control of illicit activities) was specifically designed to give the GOE political cover.

Comment

18. (C) Bustamante's position and authority exceed those of the Defense and Foreign Ministers, and he has Correa's confidence on the most important national security matters. We consider him to be increasingly pragmatic about security cooperation with the U.S. as he gains experience and knowledge about regional threats facing Ecuador. Bustamante's visit to Washington offers an important opportunity to engage with a key Correa administration player.
JEWELL